

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses some points regarding the introduction to the research. Section A discusses reasons why teaching English to hearing-impaired students is challenging. Section B formulates the problems in the background into research questions. Section C explains research purposes. Section D provides research significance theoretically and practically. Section E presents research framework and theories of the previous study. The last section F explains the results of previous research.

A. Background

Every child with a disability in Indonesia has the right to education, based on Act number 72 of 1991 and Decree of Ministry of Education and Culture number 157 of 2014 article 4. Thus, the government established a special school called *Sekolah Luar Biasa (SLB)*. In line with that statement, according to Redbridge (2014), as cited in Ristiani (2018) a special school is a special environment designed to facilitate students with disabilities. Students with disabilities such as deaf, blind, or other types are facilitated and helped learn in the special school. Teachers for special schools are also regulated in Act number 72 of 1991 article 20, which states that teachers for special schools have to have a special qualification as special education teachers. However, according to a special schoolteacher, some special schools do not follow the regulation. It is because the schools need more teachers, and teachers who are graduated from special education are not enough to fulfill the demand. Thus, some special schools still hire teachers even though they are not special education graduates. Furthermore, referring to Act number 72 of 1991 chapter 8 and Decree of Ministry of Education and Culture number 157 of 2014 article 9, special school's curriculum is not much different from regular schools. The curriculum is designed to follow the needs of the students.

A special school is designed with special facilities, teaching methods, and materials (Hallahan et al., 2006; Avianita et al., 2018). In special schools, every

student has a different reaction to the teacher's stimuli because they have different learning abilities (Harmer, 2007; Kocyigit & Artar, 2015). As stated in Comprehensive Child Development Service (2008), the students' performance of learning abilities are vary in pace, it can be normal, problems/slow, or disorders/disabilities. For the students who able to perform normally or quickly despite their special needs, learning process might not be a problem. However, it is hard for students who have learning disabilities to be aware of how their minds work and perform actively in their education (El-Koumy, 2016). Therefore, the English learning process for them is different from regular students, especially for hearing-impaired students.

Hearing-impaired students are students with hearing loss that it is hard for them to receive information in the form of sounds; some of the hearing-impaired students also show a speech difficulty (Adi et al., 2017). It leads them to be not optimum when understanding the material from the teacher, particularly English language material. Therefore, compared to unimpaired students, in English learning and teaching, hearing-impaired students would face some challenges. Thus, the teacher who teaches them should consider their hearing loss and could appropriately choose a method to transfer the knowledge.

Based on Adi et al. (2017), communication with hearing-impaired students is one of the challenges that the teacher faced in teaching English. It needs teachers' understanding that hearing-impaired students have several special education needs in the context of foreign language communication development (Domagała-Zyśk & Podlewska, 2019). Hearing-impaired students' special needs are that they have some ways to communicate: some students prefer sign language while others prefer speech, but to a certain extent, does not limit them to use other options against their preference. As foreign language teachers are usually non-hearing-impaired people and teach groups of hearing loss students, they would pass this communication challenge if they were fluent signers (Mole et al., 2008; Kontra et al., 2015). Otherwise, sign language interpreters or assistants may help them to communicate in the classroom. Because of the

teachers' limited sign language skills, it provokes problems and challenges in the teaching-learning process with hearing-impaired students.

Based on limited interview with a teacher for hearing-impaired students exposed that at the beginning, she had less awareness in teaching English to hearing-impaired students even though she is a graduate from English Department. Unavoidably, she had to adapt quickly to meet the students' needs. She expressed that she thought she knew how to treat the hearing-impaired students well, but turned out that the practice is harder than expected. She said that she explains everything using sign language. She also stated that the curriculum flow could not always be followed because the hearing-impaired students' ego is high and they tend to tantrum when they do not like to study as they please. Those problems are in line with statement by Saputri (2018) that the problems the teacher faced are divided into two: internal and external problems. Lack in vocabularies, being cranky and sensitive, having difficulties in acquiring and producing spoken language, and having double disorder are considered as internal problems. Meanwhile lack motivation to study at home from the parents, lack initiative from the teacher, and less attention in distribution of learning instrument from the government are considered as external problems.

There are two previous studies used as a reference in this research. *Teaching Special Students: English Lessons for Deaf Students in Indonesian Special Junior High Schools* by Adi et al. (2017) is the first reference. The second is *Teaching English to Children with Hearing-Impairment* by Dewi et al. (2019). The first study was conducted to discuss the teacher's challenges and tactics when teaching hearing-impaired students in SMALB-B YPTB Malang. Meanwhile, the second study focused on investigating teacher's challenges in developing hearing-impaired students' classroom activities in SLBN Metro. From those explanations above, in this research, the researcher focuses on exploring what English teachers in special school face in teaching and what are the teacher's strategies to cope with the challenges in SLB-B YPLB Blitar, East Java.

B. Research Questions

From the research background, the problems are formulated into the following questions:

1. What are the teacher's challenges in teaching English to hearing-impaired students?
2. What are the teacher's strategies to deal with the challenges?

C. Research Purposes

Considering the research questions above, the purposes of this research are:

1. To discuss teacher's challenges in teaching English to hearing-impaired students.
2. To find out the teacher's strategies to deal with the challenges.

D. Research Significances

This research has two significances: theoretically and practically.

1. Theoretically: this research is expected to enrich the previous knowledge studies about teaching English to hearing-impaired students.
2. Practically: this research gives significance to both English teachers with no special education background or experience and EED students to prepare them in teaching hearing-impaired students.

E. Research Framework

The National Deaf Children's Society (2003) states that acquiring English is tough for numerous hearing-impaired children. Therefore, their vocabulary may not be as broad as their hearing peers may. While learning foreign languages, hearing-impaired students face several challenges: hard to get to know a foreign vocabulary, to remember the word, to differentiate one word to other words, and to use the words correctly (Bedoin, 2011; Domagała-Zyśk, 2015, 2013; Kontra et al., 2015; Domagała-Zyśk & Podlowska, 2019). Those situations are critical for the teachers to keep in mind when they are about to use unusual or technical words. Teachers for hearing-impaired students should

use familiar and straightforward words so that hearing-impaired students do not get confused.

Harmer (2001) believed that teaching is considered a complex profession since it consists of approach, methodology, and technique. The teaching process between regular students and hearing-impaired students is different. How the teacher sets the class is vital because the students should be able to see the teacher's hand movements or lip (Adi et al., 2017). Based on the research, it is necessary to place mirrors on all sides of the class. Therefore, the students can see the teacher's lip movement, which will help to focus and avoid disruptions since hearing-impaired students are visual students.

In a developing country, teaching English as a foreign language is a challenging task (Akbari, 2015). A study by Adi et al. (2017) revealed that teaching hearing-impaired students are challenging. These challenges are:

1. Explaining materials related to students' knowledge;
2. Getting their attention, giving examples and definitions;
3. Defining the difference of similar words in diverse contexts; and
4. Understanding students' pronunciation from their lip movements.

Quoted from Willis (2008), "Teaching is not meant to be a practice in perfection. Rather it is an opportunity to continuously grow, learn, ask questions, be confused, and overcome challenges." Many things teachers must observe to teach English to hearing-impaired students. Therefore, to deliver the material well, they need to be prepared before they face the situation. They have to understand the hearing-impaired students' characteristics because of the different ways of communicating, especially if they did not understand sign language.

F. Previous Research

There are three previous research reports related to this research regarding English language teacher challenges and hearing-impaired students. The research reports are listed down below.

Sabiq and Sukirno (2020) aimed to inspect the practice of visual media and teacher challenges in increasing English vocabulary for hearing-impaired students. Qualitative descriptive is used as the research approach. The research showed that the teacher faced several challenges when teaching vocabulary to hearing-impaired students, they are: (a) the lack of practice pronouncing the words resulted in the students easy to forget the vocabularies they learned in the class; (b) some words have similar lip movements with other words; therefore it made the students misunderstanding on reading the lips movements, and (c) the limit skill of the teacher to use technological-based media in providing the materials effected students' interest in learning. The dissimilarity of this research and the present research located on the material. The material explored in the previous research was English vocabulary, whereas the present research would be teaching English in general.

Furthermore, Muslim (2019) used descriptive qualitative methods to conduct a research designed to define the challenges encountered by English teachers in teaching grammar to hearing-impaired students. The research revealed four challenges: lack of vocabulary, hard to grasp the pronunciation, difficult at arranging words grammatically, and troubled to comprehend the explanation of grammar because the teacher had to repeatedly explain with hand movement or slow the articulation of the speech. What distinguishes this research from the current research lies in the material that is researched. The previous research investigated teaching English grammar, while the current research would investigate teaching English in general.

Meanwhile, Getnet (2019) purposed to discover the communication challenges between hearing-impaired students and EFL teachers in Inclusive English Language classrooms. The research is conducted using the qualitative method. As reported from the research, different from teaching in special needs school; in an inclusive school, the teacher did not prepare any special facilities to support the hearing-impaired students in EFL classroom. In line with that, the teacher absences in preparing activities, teaching methods, and selecting and designing teaching material that suits the hearing-impaired students' needs. The

teacher also had to provide captions for every narration and to teach how to pronounce words correctly. The contrast of this research to the current research happens on the type of school. The previous research was conducted in an inclusive school; meanwhile, the recent research would be in a special school.

Aside from the variances of the previous research presented above, the current research has different purposes. In this current research, English teachers' challenges in a special school and hearing-impaired students is explored. Therefore, various related theories is explained in the next chapter.

